



2019 Testimony

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EDUCATION COMMITTEE

March 1, 2019

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent 99% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate the opportunity to testify on bills of interest to towns and cities.

- **SB 874** **An Act Concerning Education Initiatives and Services In Connecticut**
- **SB 457** **An Act Concerning The Size Of School Districts**
- **SB 738** **An Act Concerning The Creation Of Regional School Districts**

CCM understands and appreciates the complex nature and wide scope of the issues these bills seek to address. Towns and cities are not immune to the growing fiscal crisis at the State level. We understand the impact that it has on the ability of the State to provide critical aid to some of the most important programs towns, cities and the State are responsible for providing to all of Connecticut's residents.

To this end, we urge the Committee to acknowledge the important role of mandate relief and increased flexibility at the local level with respect to implementation of new initiatives. These items are not mutually exclusive to recognizing true efficiencies and cost savings. Instead, they better equip and enable municipalities to work with the State in identifying a holistic and comprehensive path forward.

We appreciate the dialogue these bills have generated and we remain committed to engaging all stakeholders on these important issues. However, we do have a number of concerns with these proposals.

We have concerns with components of SB 738 and how the bill is drafted. While we understand that this bill is not representative of the finished product, we cannot support the broad, one size fits all framework this proposal would place on municipalities with a population of less than 40,000 residents. Furthermore, towns and cities each have unique intricacies and details that define their operations and the probate system may not be the most feasible framework for implementation of regional education initiatives.



While we have concerns with SB 738, we support the language regarding Board of Education and town government back office function alignment as this promotes efficiency and savings. Additionally, we support language in the bill that enables coalition bargaining when two or more bargaining units are affected by the formation of a new school district. We believe this promotes regionalism. We are encouraged by these components and remain willing to work with the proponents and all stakeholders on these items.

We also have concerns with components of SB 457 and how the bill is drafted. This proposal would impose a broad and over-reaching framework on school districts with fewer than 2,000 students. The broadly defined framework of the bill could jeopardize the quality and consistency of programming currently provided by local and regional boards of education.

While we cannot support the approach outlined in SB 457, we do support the savings intent of the bill. We believe this could be achieved by allowing the town government to ensure back office savings with Boards of Education. This would be efficient and cost-effective – without sacrificing high quality public education. **We believe these changes should be enacted immediately without the unnecessary delay of a study as proposed by SB 874.** This can be done by changing state law to allow town governments to require consolidation and/or sharing of non-instructional services and resources between school districts and the municipality in which they are located.

In conclusion, CCM fully supports initiatives that encourage municipalities, and local and regional boards of education to realize efficiencies while judiciously allocating resources. Accordingly, we are encouraged by the dialogue these bills have generated and we remain supportive of efforts that encourage local and regional boards of education, and municipalities to realize efficiencies.

To that end, we would also ask the Committee to consider the following suggestions for mandate relief to better equip towns and cities to meet the objectives of these bills.

- Adopt the federal standards pertaining to the “burden of proof” for special education services.
- Eliminate the Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR), except for Alliance Districts – or eliminate the MBR for towns that pay more than 50% of their education costs.

CCM stands ready and willing to work with all stakeholders on these important issues.



If you have any questions, please contact Daniel C. Giungi, Senior Legislative Associate for CCM, at dgiungi@ccm-ct.org or (203) 498-3023.



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